

## Local

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## UN hosts webinar on promoting mental health in Kuwait schools

**KUWAIT:** The United Nations in the State of Kuwait represented by the Resident Coordinator Office, the WHO Office in Kuwait and UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education organized an expert-led webinar to highlight the needs and opportunities for a mental health strategy to be considered, adopted and actioned by all schools in Kuwait. This webinar also aimed to build consensus into the mental health needs and interests of children and adolescents whilst highlighting the responsibility and respective contribution of a wide range of stakeholders. The webinar will form an early stage of a mental health policy planning exercise for schools by identifying the need for and key features of a school mental health policy.

Mental health problems can manifest in children as sadness or worry, attention deficits, behavioral difficulties, and deterioration in school performance. Early screening and deployment of effective interventions can reduce the likelihood of continuity and exacerbation of mental health associated impairments into adulthood. The rise in violence, drug addiction and depression amongst adolescents in Kuwait over the past few years has been alarming. A number of contributory factors have been found to exert impact on mental health; these include stressful events in early life such as child abuse and neglect, social isolation and negative lifestyle habits including increased passive screen time and lack of physical activity. The pandemic has underscored the urgency of putting in place collective action plans and policies that protect those most vulnerable and promote their wellbeing. Plans must recognize that children's and adolescents' development stage can influence his/her degree of vulnerability to mental health disorders. Accordingly, schools must be well positioned and prepared to identify the need for early interventions to reduce risk factors for mental health disorders and promote protective factors.

Dr Tarek El-Sheikh, Representative of United Nations Secretary-General Resident Coordinator noted that "schools need to adopt innovative solutions to keep linkages open with students, particularly in states of emergencies," further emphasizing that every school should be a mental health-promoting school through a holistic approach that builds on relationships with students, families and teachers.

Dr Assad Hafeez, WHO Representative in Kuwait called all stakeholders to attend to the global statistics which reaffirm a need for urgent action. Dr Hafeez followed that "globally the largest burden of mental health falls in young people."

The Ministry of Health was represented by Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad, who left a vivid image of friendships of early childhood and their formative impact on a child's development. He stressed that "schools are central to nurturing a child's skills of social connection and emotional regulation," and that the Ministry of Health in Kuwait in partnership with the Departments of School Health and Primary Healthcare are in the midst of preparing a mental health plan for school aged pupils.

Schools are one of several critical systems of care that ensure the delivery of essential health services to children including protection, and psycho-social support. The unprecedented length of school closures imposed because of COVID-19 may have thus contributed to significant imperils to children's overall wellbeing and development, not just their learning. With school reopening plans and the focus on accelerating learning to remediate losses, it is crucial that effective mental health and wellbeing plans are put in place so as not to lose sight of the unequivocal link between mental health and educational attainment. Equally so, these plans must necessarily factor in teacher preparedness to take on this responsibility and their personal wellbeing by mainstreaming into them the requisite capacity building exercises, tools, and modalities for the sharing of best practices by educational psychologists, and considerations to the appropriate strategies to mitigate teacher burnout. Indeed, teachers are important role models to students and formative agents in shaping their developmental experience and motivation.

Global statistics and evidence-based interventions guided the discussion thereafter, highlighting potential opportunities to tap into the promise of innovative technologies such as technology assisted teachers' training platforms, Chatbots that aid the implementation of interventions and a games-based platform to promote the uptake of life skills and participation in students. The webinar ended with a call to continue the conversation towards actional mental health strategies for schools across the nation.

Speakers in the webinar were: Dr Bibi Alamiri, MD, ScD Kuwait Center for Mental Health Adult, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist; Shaimaa Allami Psychologist at Ministry of Education Department of Mental Health and Wellbeing; Dr Tatjana Colin Head of UNICEF Office in Kuwait, Chief, Early Childhood Development UNICEF; Professor Atif Rahman Professor of Child Psychiatry, University of Liverpool 5; Fatema Albader Middle School English Teacher, Bayan Bilingual School Kuwait.



**KUWAIT:** Vehicles stopped at a traffic light as Kuwait City high-rise buildings are seen in the background. - Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh (To have your picture featured in the Kuwait Times' 'Photo of the Day' section, please send your horizontal, high resolution and unedited photos to local@kuwaittimes.com, along with the full name and Instagram account, in addition to a description showing the picture's location and date taken)

## Sheikh Mubarak meets Spanish ambassador to Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah received recently the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to Kuwait Miguel Jose Moro Aguilar. At the beginning of the meeting, Sheikh Mubarak welcomed Ambassador Aguilar, and offered his congratulations on the occasion of the National Day of the Kingdom of Spain, which falls on October 12 each year. Sheikh Mubarak also emphasized the distinguished historical relations between the two friendly countries in various fields, including the economic and investment relations, especially in the field of tourism and hospi-

talities. He stressed the need to exercise more effort to enhance the dual relationship by increasing the volume of trade and investment partnerships.

Ambassador Aguilar thanked Sheikh Mubarak for the generous hospitality and said that Kuwaiti investments in Spain cover many fields, including renewable energy, services, tourism, real estate and various industries. He also stressed that Spain is a popular tourist destination for Kuwaitis, and that Spain hosts approximately 30,000 Kuwaiti tourists annually. He stated that Kuwait is a country characterized by economic stability, as trade exchange between the two friendly countries has witnessed a remarkable development.

Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah hoped that the coming period would witness more cooperation, strengthening and supporting bilateral relations between the two friendly countries. At the end of the meeting, souvenirs were exchanged.



**KUWAIT:** Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah presents a souvenir to Ambassador of Spain Miguel Jose Moro Aguilar.

# Gulf Bank launches first padel tournament for local youth



**KUWAIT:** The winners in a group photo with Gulf Bank's team.

**KUWAIT:** On Friday and Saturday, Gulf Bank held a padel tournament at the Oasis Courts in Bneid Al-Gar for a group of young male and female fans of the sport which has quickly gained worldwide popularity. The bank launched the padel tournament as part of its keenness to engage directly with members of the local community by organizing fun-filled events in which both young men and women can participate.

The tournament took place on Friday and Saturday, from 4:00 pm to 10:00 pm each day, with a total of 48 teams participating, of which 16 were female doubles. The tournament was open to all those who wished to participate, including both customers and non-customers of Gulf Bank. At the end of the tournament, Gulf Bank presented cash prizes to the winners, with the winning team receiving KD 1,000, the second place winners receiving KD 500, and the third place winners taking home KD 300, in addition to trophies for all the players.

The first place male winners were Abdulrahman Al Awadhi and Dawood Hashem, second place winners were Hassan Al-Ghareeb and Mohammad Al-Qattan, and the third place prize was earned by Abdulhameed Al-Shatti and Ahmed Qasem. On the females' side, the first place winning team was Mariam Seraj and Dana Al-Fulaij, the second place winners were Dana Khajah and Yasmeen Sultan, and the third place winners were Maryam Al-Sadhan and Reem Al-Ajeel.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its



**Ahmed Al-Amir**

**C**ommenting on the tournament, the Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, Ahmed Al-Amir, said: "We were pleased with the success of Gulf Bank's padel tournament, which we organized for 48 teams of local youth. The tournament is one of many initiatives we have planned under 'GB Community', a set of activities through which Gulf Bank is keen to engage with the local community and general public.



**Reem Hasan**

**R**eem Hasan, Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, added: "We are very proud to be the first establishment to organize a women's padel championship, in which 16 young female teams participated this year. We hope that they enjoyed the tournament, and we invite them to stay tuned and participate in the many activities that Gulf Bank is planning for the future."

extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program

at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the Bank. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties and stakeholders in service of the vision.